

DREAMS PROGRAM

DEVELOPING RELATIONAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ADAPTIVE MINDS



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Your school is partnering with us, a research team from the University of Pittsburgh, to offer a new program called DREAMS (Developing Relational, Emotional, and Adaptive Minds). This is a **group-based program** designed to help students build their **social and emotional (SEL) skills** such as understanding your feelings, managing stress, handling conflicts, and perspective-taking.

The curriculum is 11 weeks and **takes place during your student's school day**. They'll meet weekly for about 60 minutes with a group of peers and your student will also have a chance to meet with the group facilitator for individual check-ins on your student's progress. The DREAMS program is enrolling students in 5th grade and higher at your school. Families will be offered up to \$275 for their student's participation in the program and their willingness to complete some online surveys at the beginning and end of the program.

We want to see how this program can help kids with their feelings, behavior, social skills, and academics. This study is approved by the University of Pittsburgh and your child's school district.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

WHO ARE WE?

We are a dedicated team of research professionals and experts in youth development, committed to empowering young minds for success in both school and life.

WHAT DO THE SESSIONS LOOK LIKE?

The program consists of a weekly 60-minute group activity and a 10-15-minute individual check-in led by our facilitator. Your child will join around 9 peers in sessions focusing on various topics. We use journals, handouts, and other materials. Each group session includes a check-in, new content, an activity to master content, and a "try out" (optional homework assignment). Our facilitators will lead the sessions. They are knowledgeable in school environments, youth development, and critical mentoring.

WHAT'S COMMUNICATION LIKE DURING THE PROGRAM?

We'll be in touch regarding program surveys (text and email). Our team will send you the same survey three times: at the start, at the end, and three months after the program. These surveys ask about how your child thinks, feels, and behaves to understand if our program is making a difference. We don't have a set formal check-in for parents, but we're willing to collaborate with you. This might involve sharing monthly reports about your child's progress, the skills they're learning, and ways you can support them.

WHEN DOES THE PROGRAM START AND END?

The program is 11 weeks. It will begin in September and end in December.

HOW ARE STUDENTS SELECTED?

All students in 5th grade and above at your school are welcome to join the program. We collaborate with school leaders to spot students who might benefit academically or behaviorally. Eligibility is based on past or ongoing stressful experiences. However, in the program, we concentrate on our strengths, not weaknesses.

WHAT DO FAMILIES THINK ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

We've been working on this program for 3 years. Students and parents appreciate the support. We've seen positive changes in participants' emotions and behaviors based on surveys and feedback. 100% of our alumni have expressed a desire to be in it again.

DETAILS & CONCERNS

IS THIS PROGRAM LIKE COUNSELING OR MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT?

No, this program is different from counseling or mental health treatment. It should not feel clinical. Instead, we use group discussions and activities to build skills in managing emotions and improving relationships. Our aim is for students to feel empowered to grow and become their best selves, leading to positive academic and behavioral outcomes in the classroom. The focus is on empowerment and skill-building rather than mental health treatment.

WHAT IS SEL AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

SEL stands for social-emotional learning. Our program focuses on SEL because it teaches important skills like understanding emotions and building healthy relationships. These skills are crucial for success in various areas, such as at home, in school, and later in the workplace.

WHAT ARE THE PROGRAM BENEFITS & RISKS?

The program aims to maximize your child's potential by focusing on their strengths. They'll make connections with other kids and learn emotional and social skills. Finishing the program might open doors for opportunities, like becoming peer support mentors.

Students are not required to share anything they do not want to during sessions. Any personal experiences shared during these sessions are confidential. We use made-up examples to show behaviors and help learn skills. Sometimes talking about feelings might cause a bit of stress, but our leaders are good at helping with this. aid in skill learning. Sometimes, reflecting on emotions might cause slight stress, but our leaders are skilled in navigating this.

IS THERE AN ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENT?

We expect your child to attend every session they are able. Excused absences are related to being in-school (like in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, illness, injury, or family emergency) or because of academics (like a big test or falling behind in class).

We care about your child's schoolwork and understand if you're worried about how the DREAMs program might affect their attendance or grades. DREAMs is meant to help, not hurt, their learning. Your child's teachers will know about this program. We make sure to keep an eye on how your child is doing in classes, so they don't fall behind. If your child is worried about missing class, they can go to class and come back to the program the next week.

COMPENSATION INFO

HOW MUCH WILL WE GET PAID?

Our payment system is pro-rated. How much money you get depends on if your child finishes their survey, if you do too, and if you give your SSN for payment. Your family can earn between \$124 to \$275 in total. There will be three surveys: before, after, and three months after the program. These questions want to know how your child thinks and feels. When you finish the surveys, you'll get a prepaid Mastercard gift card.

WHY DO YOU NEED MY SSN?

SSN is optional. During the payment card setup, we request your SSN over a private phone call. Our payment system (Vincent Payment Solutions) requests SSNs to make sure our payments are safe and tracked accurately. Your SSN won't be used for research. Once it's in the payment system, it's not visible to anyone else. However, it's completely up to you whether you want to provide your SSN. If you choose not to provide your SSN, you'll receive only 76% of each payment due to tax-withholding requirements.

WHEN AND HOW DO WE RECEIVE THE CARD?

The card will be set up in your name at the beginning of the program. It will be mailed to your address with a \$0 balance. Once received, contact our staff (mah386@pitt.edu), and they'll load the payment amount onto it. You can use the card anywhere be it online, in-person, or at an ATM. If you withdraw cash from an ATM, it's best to withdraw all the money at once since it's free. After the first withdrawal, the ATM charges a \$1.25 transaction fee. Your card PIN number is 0, followed by the 3-digit CVV code on the back. There's a \$2 inactivity fee if the card isn't used for a year. This fee doesn't affect personal financial accounts. **Do not throw away your card when there's a \$0 balance. You need the same card for all program payments.**